The Duty and Happineſs of Delighting in GOD.

A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

UNIVERSITY

OF

OXFORD,

At S^t MARY's,

Dec. 27. 1713.

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Publiſh'd at the Requeſt of M^r *Vice-Chancellor.*

OXFORD,

Printed for *Stephen Fletcher* Bookſeller: And are to be Sold by *A. Churchil, J. Knapton, W. Taylor, H. Clements*, and *J. Morphew* Booktellers in *London.* 1713.

Price Three Pence.

Pſalm xxxvii. 4.

Delight thou in the Lord, and he ſhall give thee thy Hearts Deſire.

IT may ſeem ſtrange, that Brute Creatures, by the meer Inſtinct of Nature, ſhould obſerve ſo much Order in all their Actions, and ſo conſtantly purſue the End for which they were made; and that Man, a thoughtful, inquiſitive, Being, ſhould almoſt always act at random, and be the only irregular Part of the whole Creation. But when we conſider, that he is compounded of two Principles, directly oppoſite to, and perpetually jarring againſt, each other; that his Body and Soul are not more United in their Intereſts, than they are Divided in their Inclinations and Deſires; we ſhall ceaſe to wonder, that he is ſo inconſiſtent with Himſelf, and ſo various in all his Actions.

For till we can maintain a good Correſpondence betwixt our Rational and Senſitive Faculties, and make them both agree in one common Purſuit; 'till we can convince our ſelves, that the Entertainments of Reaſon make up the Happineſs of the whole Man, and not only procure us a Heaven in Reverſion, but alſo give us the moſt refin'd Pleaſures here, that we are capable of enjoying; Our Affections will be always divided betwixt the Pleaſures of Senſe and of Reaſon, and we ſhall be apt to prefer the Gratifications of a Brute, to the Delights of an Angel, becauſe the one are preſent, and

the other, falſly ſuppos'd to be altogether Unknown, and at a Diſtance.

One cannot therefore do a greater Service to Mankind, than by directing them to a way, that leads to preſent as well as future Felicity; by ſhewing them, that in Religion, the Happineſs of both Worlds conſiſts: and that to *delight in the Lord*, which is to begin Heaven here, comprehends in it all the Joys, which either Senſe or Reaſon can deſire, which either Heaven or Earth can give us. *Delight thou in the Lord, and he ſhall give thee thy Hearts Deſire.* That is, Affect thy Heart with the love of God, and let a deſire to pleaſe Him be the only Principle of all thy Actions, and he will give Thee that perfect Satisfaction and Tranquillity of Mind, which thy Soul ſo importunately deſires; and which thou canſt never obtain, while thy Affections are plac'd on ſo many different Objects, and thy Happineſs is parcel'd out into ſuch a Variety of empty Joys, and trifling Amuſements.

In my diſcourſe upon theſe words, I ſhall

Firſt, Very briefly endeavour to ſhew, wherein this *Delight in God* conſiſts.

Secondly, That to *love or delight in God* is the higheſt Act of Religion.

Thirdly, That it is the Supreme Felicity of our Nature.

Firſt, Then, to *delight in God*, is to take Pleaſure in his Worſhip and Service, to approach his Altars with Joy and Thankſgiving, to hear his Word with Reverence and Attention, to converſe with Him here in Meditation and Prayer, and long to enjoy him hereafter in Glory. 'Tis to have ſuch a lively and

and affecting Senſe of the Amiableneſs of his Nature, that, *as the Hart deſireth the Waterbrooks*, Our Souls may *pant and thirſt* after God as our *Sovereign Good*; and wiſh for nothing in Competition with Him, nothing but in order to the Enjoyment of Him.

And *Secondly*, That to *delight in God* in this manner, is the higheſt Act of Religion, may be evinc'd from the Conſideration of theſe two particulars.

Firſt, That it obliges us, by entertaining and keeping up a juſt Senſe, and worthy Notion of God in our Minds, to aſcribe that kind of Honour and Praiſe to Him, which he ſeems moſt to regard, and take Pleaſure in.

Secondly, That it enables us to perform his Will in the moſt acceptable manner, by acting upon a Principle of *Filial Love*, which is the ſtrongeſt Motive to Univerſal Obedience.

Firſt, Then, to *delight in God* obliges us, by entertaining and keeping up a juſt Senſe, and worthy Notion of God in our Minds, to aſcribe that kind of Honour and Praiſe to Him, which he ſeems moſt to regard, and take Pleaſure in.

Man, as he is a Being, little lower than the Angels, as he is Heir of Heaven, and a kind of Repreſentative of God Himſelf upon Earth, is entitl'd by the Prerogative of his Nature to addreſs himſelf to God with a delightful Freedom, with the humble Confidence of a Son towards a belov'd and loving Father. And in all the Revelations which God has made of Himſelf to Mankind, he takes upon him thoſe ſoft and endearing Appellations of a *Father*, *Redeemer*, and *Comforter*; and aſſures us, that his Kindneſs and Affection for us, under each of theſe Characters, ſurpaſſes all our Notions of

Love and Endearment. As a Parent, his Love to Mankind exceeds the moſt tender Affection of the moſt tender Sex, *can a Woman forget her ſucking Child, that ſhe ſhould have no Compaſſion on the Son of her Womb, yea they may forget, yet will I never forget Thee.* As a *Redeemer*, we are told, *that greater Love hath no Man, then that a Man lay down his Life for his Friend*, but in this God manifeſted the Superiority of his Affection, *that while we were Enemys Chriſt dy'd for us.* And where can we find a Comforter amongſt Men, *who in the Multitude of Sorrows that we have in our Hearts, is always able to refreſh our Souls?* In a word, all our Notions and Conceptions of God are full of his Goodneſs, and *the Wonders which he hath done for the Children of Men.*

For God as a *Father*, *Redeemer*, and *Comforter*, is not more amiable than as a *Lawgiver* and a *Judge*; all his Commands are ſo many Acts of Grace to Mankind, and in return for ſo great Favours he requires nothing of us, but that we advance our own Natures to the higheſt Perfection: that we love, delight in, and addreſs our ſelves to Him as Friends, tho' we are unworthy the Honour of being his Servants.

And ſhall we be made capable of ſo great an Honour and not enjoy it? Shall we baniſh our ſelves to the diſtance of Aliens and Strangers, when we are ſo kindly invited to become, as *Abraham* is ſtil'd, the *Friends of God*? Shall God admit us to the Enjoyment of Himſelf, and we ſtand off, and refuſe to have any Intercourſe with him? Shall we prefer uſeleſs Friendſhips and Alliances with Men to the high Priviledge of knowing and loving God, and of being known and belov'd by him? Are we afraid to approach ſo great a Being with Delight and Con-

Confidence, upon account of the infinite Diſtance that is betwixt us? Or are we terrify'd by thoſe few Inſtances which the *Scripture* records of his Wrath and Severity againſt Sinners? If indeed we are reſolv'd to continue in our Sins, we have juſt reaſon to tremble in the Preſence of God, for towards ſuch Perſons he is repreſented as a *Great and Terrible Judge*, and a *Conſuming Fire*. But if we draw near to Him in Meditation and Prayer, and make our Hearts *fit Manſions* for his Holy Spirit to dwell in, he will *delight* to draw near to us, and notwithſtanding the infinite Diſtance, *come and make his Abode with us*. And then only can we have a juſt Senſe and worthy Notion of God, when we are far advanc'd into this Divine Friendſhip and holy Intimacy with him; and not only pay him the Homage of a Creature to his Creator, but the Love of a Friend, to the Friend of his Boſom, and offer up our whole Souls to be poſſeſs'd by him without a Rival.

For as it hath been always eſteem'd the higheſt Title of Honour, that was ever aſcrib'd to an Earthly Prince, to be ſtil'd, The *Love and Delight of Mankind*; in like manner God is pleas'd to account it the chief Glory which redounds to Him, from the Works of his own hands, to be lov'd, and prais'd, and ador'd by his Creatures, as the only Object that deſerves their Affections. But to approach Him as an Overawful and Angry Being, only with *Fear and Trembling*, and to imagine, that He requires a greater Diſtance of our Affections, than to be *delighted* in by us, is to derogate from his Perfections, and unfairly repreſent the Condition and Priviledges of the Rational Part of his Creation. 'Tis to magnify his Greatneſs, by leſſening his Goodneſs,

neſs, in which chiefly, as He Himſelf aſſures us, all his Greatneſs conſiſts: for when *Moſes* deſir'd, that *God would ſhew him his Glory, behold, the Lord paſſed by before him, and proclaim'd, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long ſuffering, and abundant in Goodneſs and Truth, keeping Mercy for Thouſands, forgiving Iniquity, and Tranſgreſſion, and Sin*, Exod. 34. 6. And in our Conception of things, we cannot but think it the nobleſt Employment, of a Being, infinitely Perfect in Himſelf, to do good, and communicate his Happineſs to others. And the Lower the Majeſty of God deſcends in Acts of Kindneſs to his Creatures, the Higher he raiſes our Notions of Him, ſo that if we would repreſent our *Bleſſed Saviour* in all his Glory, we muſt not only contemplate Him as ſitting at the Right Hand of God, but alſo as expiring on a Croſs for miſerable Sinners.

Secondly, To *Delight in God* enables us to perform his Will in the moſt acceptable manner, by acting upon a Principle of *Filial Love*, which is the ſtrongeſt Motive to Univerſal Obedience.

As the Service which we pay to an Earthly Magiſtrate, is never ſo Acceptable, when it proceeds from Fear, and a *Servile Dread* of his Authority; as when it flows from Reſpect, and an affectionate Concern for his Perſon: ſo our Sacrifice of Praiſe and Thankſgiving will be rejected at the Throne of Grace, unleſs we offer up our Hearts along with it; for the great King of Heaven and Earth delights to Reign in the Affections of his Creatures. He regards not ſo much the Obedience it ſelf, as the Intention with which we perform it; and rejects, or accepts, it, as it proceeds from a *Servile*, or a *Generous* Compliance to his Will, from *Fear*, or a

a Heart devoted to his Service. For tho' *Fear* in Conjunction with other graces, is a Neceſſary Vertue, and may be us'd as a uſeful check upon the aſpiring Paſſion of *Love*, to preſerve it from the Extravagancies of Enthuſiaſm, and awe it within the bounds of a ſober and rational Devotion; yet of it ſelf, it is a *narrow ſlaviſh Paſſion*, and can never prove a Principle of Univerſal Obedience, becauſe it takes in but half of our Duty, and makes us only careful not to Offend; whereas Love is of ſuch an active Nature, that wherever it is plac'd, it exerts all our Faculties and Powers to pleaſe the Beloved Object. Hence it is, that Love is frequently ſtil'd in *Scripture* the *fulfilling of the Law*, becauſe it not only includes in it, but communicates Vertue, to all the other Parts of our Duty. It animates our Faith, encourages our Hope, and exalts our Charity, to the higheſt Degree of Religious Perfection. For as Life it ſelf, without ſome Degree of Love and Benevolence to Mankind, is dull and inſipid, and our Being ſcarce animated; ſo when our Vertues want this Divine Principle to ſuſtain and keep them up, they grow weak and faint, and are ſoon ſacrific'd to our Luſts and Pleaſures.

And therefore we may obſerve, that they who have had the moſt ardent Affection for God, notwithſtanding they have been guilty of great Errors and Miſcarriages, have been always the *Favourites* of *Divine Providence*. If we look into the Life of holy *David*, and conſider what thoſe extraordinary Vertues were, which gave him that diſtinguiſhing Character of a *Man after Gods own Heart*, we ſhall find them to be chiefly the Warmth and Conſtancy of his Addreſſes to God, and the Delight he took in his Worſhip and Service. In the

the ordinary Courſe of his Life and Actions, he was a Man of like Paſſions and Infirmities with us, and hurry'd away by the Violence of them, into the moſt horrid Crimes of Adultery and Murder: but in his Cloſet he ſeems to be ſomething more than Man, and his Prayers are offer'd up with that Intenſeneſs of Zeal, that they are like the Devotions of an *Angel*, or *Saint* in Glory. Such paſſionate Expreſſions of *Hope*, and *Truſt*, and *Delight in God*, break forth in every page of his Divine Compoſitions, that we cannot wonder, if ſuch ſublime and exalted Piety was able to *cover a Multitude of Sins*; eſpecially when he was ſo ſenſible of the Diſpleaſure of God, that his Repentance bore proportion to the Enormity of his Guilt, ſo that *he roar'd for the very Diſquietneſs of his Heart, when his Sins had hid the face of God from him.* It was, in all Probability, this holy Delight in his Divine Maſter, that advanc'd the bleſſed *Apoſtle* and *Evangeliſt* of this day, to the Honour of lying in the Boſom of our *Lord*, and of being ſtil'd his *Beloved Diſciple.* Tho' our *Saviour* was attended by Men of the higheſt Attainments in Vertue, yet the Affection of a tender unexperienced Youth, who Diligently follow'd him, and delighted to hear thoſe ſublime Truths, which 'tis probable at that time ſurpaſs'd his Comprehenſion, was more acceptable in his ſight, than the Faith of St. *Peter*, the Integrity of *Nathanael*, or the Courage and Capacity of all his other Diſciples.

We are led into this Opinion, by obſerving that St. *John* gave the higheſt proof of Love to his *Lord*, by attending on, and believing in him, as he hung upon the Croſs, when all the reſt of his Diſciples forſook him. And what may con-

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firm us in it, is, that he recommends and inculcates this great Duty of *Love*, more frequently and earneſtly than any of them; inſomuch that he proceeds ſo far as to ſay, that *God is Love, and that he who dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God, and God in him; but that he who loveth not, doth not know God** : and certainly he who hath not a juſt Notion of God, can never render an acceptable Service to Him. And indeed the oppoſite Paſſion of *Servile Fear*, which uſually ſways the Soul, when this divine Vertue is wanting, ſeems to be perfectly ignorant of the chief Perfections of the Deity: becauſe it only terrifies our Apprehenſion with the Contemplation of one ſingle Attribute, by which God governs human Affairs, Infinite Juſtice; without encouraging us with the milder and more glorious Proſpect of His Mercy and Goodneſs. Whereas *Love* joyns both thoſe Attributes together in their brighteſt Luſtre, and makes them agree in a bleſſed Harmony; ſoftens and adorns unlimited Power with the mild rays of boundleſs Mercy, and tempers infinite Bounty and Clemency with needful Juſtice and Severity: It frees us from all unreaſonable Terrors of God, as an imperious Maſter and inexorable Judge; and from all vain hopes in the Divine Goodneſs and Clemency, which are not founded upon an exact Conformity to his Will, and Imitation of his Perfections; by aſſuring us, that God can never approve of any thing but what is like Himſelf, that is, Righteouſneſs, Purity and Holineſs. For the trueſt Foundation of Love and Friendſhip is a ſimilitude of Temper and Diſpoſition: ſo that we muſt conform our ſelves to the *Image* of God, if we would enjoy his Favour; we muſt be Holy as he is Holy, if we hope to be Happy, as He is.

* 1 *Joh.* 4. 16, 8.

Beſides, Love is ſuch a chearful Principle of Obedience, as will make the hardeſt *Yoke eaſy*, and the heavieſt *Burden light*, and carry us through the moſt difficult parts of our Duty, with Pleaſure and Alacrity. Whereas *Fear*, by which I mean, *Servile Fear*, when it is not actuated by *Filial Love*, is a Melancholy Paſſion, which excludes the Graces of Hope and Joy, the Delightful Acts of Praiſe and Thankſgiving from it's Society. It ſcares weak minds with terrible Apprehenſions of Sin, where no Sin is; and leſſens their Confidence in God to ſuch a degree, as to put them into the Condition of the Spirits in Hell, whoſe Faith brings forth no fruit but Deſpair, who *believe and tremble*. A falſe notion in Religion, which, under the Goſpel Diſpenſation of Grace and Mercy, diſhonours God no leſs than Atheiſm it ſelf; ſince it cannot be a greater Crime to deny his Being, then to repreſent him as a ſtern and implacable Judge, who is deaf to all our Cryes, and takes delight in afflicting his Creatures.

By Men of ſuch ſevere and inexorable Diſpoſitions, and not by a God of infinite Compaſſion, we may well ſuppoſe thoſe rigid Decrees were form'd, which have Predeſtinated ſome Perſons to Grace and Salvation, and allow'd the reſt of Mankind *no place for Repentance, though they ſeek it carefully with Tears*. An Opinion, which impiouſly attempts to circumſcribe, and ſet bounds to Unlimited Goodneſs and Mercy, and gives us ſuch dreadful Apprehenſions of God, as will deſtroy all thoſe Schemes of Happineſs and Satisfaction, that are founded on Love and Delight in Him. An Abſurdity; of which I need ſay no more, then that it renders ineffectual all the Laws and Threats and Promiſes of the Goſpel, ſince whatever we do,

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our Doom is fixt, and 'tis out of our Power to reverſe the ſentence.

To conclude this Head; *Fear* is onely the Beginning or Introduction to Religion, but *Love* the Conſummation and Perfection of it. The Principle which animates the Religion of *Angels*, and of the *Spirits of juſt Men made perfect*, and lifts us up into a Communion and Fellowſhip with them. In a word, it is not onely the Means of their Happineſs, but their Heaven it ſelf; in the practice of which, all the Felicity they enjoy, or we expect, doth chiefly conſiſt. Which leads me to my *Third* general Head, that to *delight in God*, is the ſupreme Felicity of our Nature, as it is expreſt in the Text, *Delight thou in the Lord, and he ſhall give thee thy Hearts deſire.*

Which may be prov'd by conſidering this Duty,

Firſt, Abſolutely in it ſelf, as it is the Principal End and Deſign of our Creation.

Secondly, As it is the Fountain of Pleaſure, and gives the other Diverſions of life all their Agreeableneſs.

Thirdly, By ſetting forth ſome of its peculiar Properties and Advantages, and by ſhewing how truly great are its preſent Comforts, how unſpeakably great will be its future Felicity.

Firſt, I ſhall conſider this Duty abſolutely in it ſelf, as it is the Principal End and Deſign of our Creation. Since the Goodneſs of God would never permit him to Create any Appetites, without providing a ſuitable Object to ſatisfy them; that Importunate deſire of Happineſs which he hath implanted in our Nature, and the Emptineſs of all thoſe Pleaſures, which he hath provided here for our Entertainment, are a Demonſtration, that Man

was made for ſome higher *Good*, than This World can give him. For the Underſtanding and the Will are of ſo Spiritual a Nature, that nothing but what is Rational, nothing but what is Divine, can be an adequate Pleaſure to them. The Entertainments of Senſe are too groſs, and this World too narrow a Place for our unlimited Deſires to range in. But the Contemplation of infinite Truth, and the Enjoyment of an all-ſufficient *Good*, can quench our unbounded Thirſt after Knowledge and Felicity; and the moſt enlarg'd Thoughts are ſwallow'd up with reflecting upon the Glories of Heaven, upon all the Wonders and Delights of a Bleſſed Eternity. Heaven therefore is the proper place for Immortal Spirits to move in; and when our Faculties are employ'd in *knowing* and *loving God*, when our Underſtanding contemplates his infinite Wiſdom and Knowledge, and our Will embraces Him as our *Sovereign Good*, they exert themſelves with Pleaſure as upon their proper Objects, and anſwer the Ends for which they were created.

Firſt, Let us conſider the Pleaſure which the ſpeculation of the Divine Nature affords to the Underſtanding, both upon account of the Greatneſs and Newneſs of the Object. For the Greatneſs of a Being infinitely perfect in himſelf can never be enough admir'd, nor the Variety which the Contemplation of infinite Perfections affords, exhauſted. So that after we have ſpent whole Ages in the rapturous Employment of *knowing* and *loving* God, we ſhall be as far remov'd from a perfect Knowledge, from having a juſt Senſe and Admiration of Him, as ever. And if a Diſcovery of the ſecrets of Nature can refreſh the Mind with noble Images of things, and affect us with a ſenſible Pleaſure;

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how muſt the Contemplation of that Almighty Power which brought out of nothing this goodly Fabrick of the World; of that Inviſible Hand that weilds this vaſt Machine, and directs all its Motions; and of that immenſe Goodneſs which hath provided for all the Deſires of its innumerable Inhabitants, ſwell our Thoughts with the moſt magnificent Ideas of Divine Providence, and raiſe our Admiration to its higheſt Pitch of Delight and Amazement?

Secondly, Let us conſider the Pleaſure of the Will in chooſing God for it's chiefeſt *Good*. That Man is not ſufficient for his own Happineſs, and that nothing in this World but God can make Him happy, is ſo true and melancholy a Reflexion, that were there not a Being above, kind and able, to have recourſe to, This World would be a diſmal uncomfortable Place, and Life it ſelf an intolerable Oppreſſion. But when we are aſſur'd that the Favour of God will ſupply all Defects of Power and Wiſdom in Us, give us an Intereſt in his Perfections, and a ſecurity, that as Occaſion requires, they will be employ'd for our Advantage; and when in order to obtain this great Privilege, Our Will hath pitch'd upon God as its *Sovereign Good*, and we deſire to do nothing, and to be nothing, but what we are ſure will pleaſe Him; we are in a manner advanc'd into a Participation of the Divine Nature, and This Earth, amidſt all its Troubles, becomes a kind of Heaven.

But that we may be the more perfectly convinc'd, that without God, we can neither form an Idea of Happineſs, nor have any Poſſibility of obtaining it, let us conſider,

Secondly, How mean and inſipid all the other Diverſions of Life are in themſelves, till they are improv'd,

prov'd, and made agreeable to us, by this *Divine Delight* and Complacency.

If we run over the whole Circle of human Pleaſures, as they are elegantly deſcrib'd, and were no leſs elegantly enjoy'd by the Wiſe King of *Iſrael*, we ſhall find that they are ſo far from adminiſtring any ſolid Comfort and Satisfaction to us, that they are nothing but *Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*. Wealth, Honour, and ſenſual Pleaſure, are the great Idols of the World; each of which has innumerable Votaries, who think the Attainment of one darling Delight deſerves the utmoſt care and endeavour of their whole lives. But if all theſe Ingredients of carnal Felicity joyn'd together, and enjoy'd by *Solomon* in their utmoſt Perfection, were not able to form an entire Satisfaction, and fill up the Meaſure of His Deſires; how vain are Our Hopes, how empty Our Expectations, when within the narrow Fruition of One of theſe imaginary Pleaſures, all our Happineſs is confin'd?

For theſe Diverſions are ſo far from being the ultimate End, and proper Object of our Wiſhes, that they are the chief Grounds and Foundation of all our Trouble and Diſquiet. The purſuit of them always wearys, and the Enjoyment always diſappoints us. Such a Pitch of Preferment, ſuch an untry'd Pleaſure and Advantage, promiſes Happineſs at a Diſtance, and ſeems to be the end of all our Deſires; but when 'tis obtain'd, That end is converted into a means of procuring ſomething further, and we are as far remov'd from the Poſſeſſion of Happineſs, as ever.

If any Pleaſure in life could ſatisfy the deſires of a rational Being, and pretend to the Honour of being our chief *Good*, it muſt be the Pleaſure of the

the Mind in the Diſcovery and Improvement of Arts and Sciences, in the Knowledge of Truth, and a cloſe Inſpection into the Secrets of Nature: An Entertainment, which ſeems to furniſh out the moſt refin'd and elegant Diverſions for our Intellectual Faculties; which therefore it would be unpardonable not to take notice of in a place ſo peculiarly ſet apart for the Enjoyment of it. And yet we are aſſur'd by one who had the greateſt Experience of all the Sons of Men in theſe matters, that *in much Wiſdom there is much Grief, and he that encreaſeth Knowledge, encreaſeth Sorrow.* For 'tis part of the Primitive Curſe that nothing is now attainable but by the *ſweat of our brows*, and thoſe things which are moſt excellent, are always acquir'd with the greateſt difficulty and Labour. And if we conſider the Blindneſs of our narrow Underſtandings, and the Intricacy of Truth, the Entanglements of Error, and the great Variety of Opinions, with which every Science, every Truth almoſt, is perplext, obſcur'd and confounded; if we obſerve how precarious the Poſſeſſion of Knowledge and Wiſdom is; how eaſily an unfaithful Memory may let ſlip thoſe Ideas that are committed to it's Truſt, and how unavoidably the defects of old age will raze and deface them; we ſhall acknowledge, that much *Study* is ſo far from being an Entertainment, that it is *a Wearineſs to the fleſh, a ſore Travel which God has given the Sons of Adam, to be afflicted therewith.*

We muſt look out therefore for ſome other Pleaſure that is more worthy of our Nature, and can reward all our Pains. And after we have ranſackt Heaven and Earth for our Felicity, we ſhall addreſs our ſelves to God as our Sovereign *Good*, and

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cry out with the Pſalmiſt, *Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? and there is none upon Earth that I deſire beſides thee.* For the good Things of This life are Trifles of ſo little Importance, that they are unworthy to be the Objects either of our Love or Averſion. God alone is to be delighted in, becauſe He only is able to anſwer all our hopes, provide for all our wants, and fill up our immenſe Capacities of Enjoyment.

And when this *Delight in God* is the Principle of all our Actions, it Sanctifies our Uſe of the good things of life, and gives thoſe Diverſions that are inſipid in themſelves, a grateful Reliſh and Agreeableneſs. Then the Honours and Riches of the World may fairly be deſir'd by us, that by Acts of Charity and Beneficence, and the more prevailing Influence of a great Example, we may promote the Happineſs of others, and advance one ſtep further in our way to Heaven. Then to encreaſe our Wealth, is to make an Addition to our Happineſs; ſince the larger our Eſtate is, it affords us ſtill greater Opportunities of recommending our ſelves to God, by putting us in a Capacity of doing more good to Mankind. In like manner an Enquiry into the Sciences of human Learning, will be a ſolid, rational and uſeful Entertainment, when it is intended chiefly to lead our Underſtandings into the knowledge of God, *in whom are laid up all the Treaſures of Wiſdom and Knowledge*; And the Diſappointments we ſhall meet with in all other Studies, will direct us to place our Affections upon God, who will then appear to be the only Object, that is able to gratify the Curioſity of human Reaſon. Then alſo we may enjoy the innocent Pleaſures of Senſe with Safety and Advantage, which

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will be ſo far from interfering with the Offices of Religion, that they will diſpoſe and enable us for the better diſcharge of them. To relieve our Spirits when they are weary, with Suitable Diverſions and Intermiſſions of our Duty, makes us return to it again with more Vigour and Alacrity. For our Nature in this imperfect State cannot bear a long Attention upon the ſame Objects, be they never ſo entertaining, but would ſink under the Weight, and be miſerable with the Enjoyment, of a continu'd, unintermitted Pleaſure. Our Souls muſt want before they can deſire, and a grateful Viciſſitude, a ſlight repaſt of inferior Delights, inflames our Thirſt after our *Sovereign Good*, who would let in joys too ſtrong for our frail Mortality to bear, were we to ſpend this life, as we ſhall do the next, in one continu'd act of Love and Complacency in him. And therefore the Concerns of another World, are never ſo well carried on, as when Religion and Innocent Avocations, like Day and Night, ſucceed each other, and every hour of our life has a diſtinct Province allotted to it, which riſes up in it's time, and is uſeful as well as *beautiful in it's ſeaſon.*

And always ſuppoſing, that, in this Diviſion, we give, as is moſt due, a juſt Preference to the devout part of our time, there is no fear that he who has taſted the ſweets of Divine Friendſhip, ſhould be willing to part with them, for all the Delights the World can give him. A true Lover of God runs no riſque from the Contagion of Vice, and bad Examples, ſince his Affections are ſo taken up with the beſt and moſt amiable of all Objects, that there is no room in his Heart for any other Paſſion: at leaſt he will think no Pleaſure ſo great, as to poſſeſs his favour, no Affliction like that which de-

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prives him of it. The Light of Gods Countenance will chear his Soul, and *fill his Heart as with marrow and fatneſs*, but *Tears will be his meat day and night, when they ſay unto him, where is now thy God.*

Which will appear if we conſider in the *Third* and *Laſt* place ſome of the peculiar Properties and Advantages of this Divine Vertue. Which uſually expreſſes the Deſires of our Soul in theſe Religious Exerciſes; In a fervent Devotion towards God, in an entire Conformity to his Laws, in a generous Diſdain of earthly Things, in a noble Confidence in Divine Providence, and in a ſtedfaſt and aſſur'd Hope of an *eternal and never fading Crown of Glory.*

And theſe Vertues will become ſo eſſential to our Happineſs, after we have been for ſome time accuſtom'd to them, that it will be as impoſſible for us to enjoy any Comfort in life, without the Influences of Gods enlivening Grace in the performance of them, as it is without his Providence and upholding Power, to *live and move and have our Being.* Of the Truth of which we ſhall ſoon be convinc'd, if we take a particular, and diſtinct View, of the high, and rational, and angelick Pleaſures, which reſult from the Practice of each of them.

Firſt, Then, do we know any ſatisfaction in life comparable to that which ſprings from Devotion? This is a Delight that grows and improves under Thought and Reflection, whereas all other Pleaſures expire in the Enjoyment. The ſcornful Epicure may make ſport with it, and ſeek for an account to be given of it, but it is not to be conceiv'd by carnal minds, becauſe it has no alliance with any of thoſe Pleaſures of ſenſe, in which they

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ſo much delight, that by thoſe only a Notion of it can be convey'd to them, and 'tis too great to be expreſt by thoſe who enjoy, admire, and reliſh the tranſporting Influence of it. But if to be reſolv'd of all our doubts, to be purg'd from all our Sins, and to be freed from all our fears, is a Pleaſure to us, all this, and much more the Practice of fervent and conſtant Devotion brings along with it, and ſecures this Happineſs to us beyond the Power of Time or Change. For nothing can interrupt our Communication with Heaven, our Prayers will find their way thither from the uttermoſt parts of the Earth, and God has promis'd, that *if we ask we ſhall receive*, *if we knock*, the Gates of Heaven it ſelf *ſhall be open'd to us.*

And *Secondly*, an exact Conformity to the divine Laws will make our Conſcience calm and ſerene, and ſettle our minds in perfect Reſt and Tranquillity. For Religion is the natural State of the Soul, and every thing that is natural, is pleaſant: and as when all the parts of the Body perform their proper Functions, and anſwer the ends for which they were deſign'd, there ariſes a ſweet Enjoyment and Complacency upon the whole, which we call, Health; ſo when the inferior Faculties of the Soul act in Subordination to Reaſon, and the Powers of Reaſon in entire Submiſſion to God, there reſults from both, the moſt ſenſible and affecting of all Pleaſures, which we call, a good Conſcience; which makes a Man enjoy Himſelf, and gives a new Reliſh to all other Enjoyments.

When alſo, *Thirdly*, we are advanc'd to ſuch a Perfection of Grace, that we can *delight in God* as our chiefeſt *Good*, the moſt exquiſite Entertain-

ments of this World will appear as flat to us, as the Toys of Children are to the ſame perſons, when their Reaſon is grown up to it's full Strength and Maturity.

Fourthly, This divine Vertue will likewiſe inſpire us with ſuch a noble Confidence in God, as will ſet us above the reach of all the little Accidents and Misfortunes of Life. For the firm Perſwaſion that nothing can happen to us, but by the Appointment of an infinitely wiſe and gracious God, who loves us better then we do our ſelves, and deſigns all his Chaſtiſements for the good of thoſe who love him, will make us eaſy under the moſt calamitous Circumſtances that can befal us, and ſupply the place of our Temporary Bleſſings and Advantages.

Since, *Laſtly*, We are aſſur'd, that all our Sorrows and Diſgraces, and even Death it ſelf, the moſt dreadful of all human Evils, will be only an Introduction to Life Immortal, to Honours unſpeakable, and Joys full of Glory; which, as ſure as God is true, will be the Portion of thoſe who *love* Him.

Thus when our Hearts are enflam'd with the *Love* of God, we ſhall have but one thing to beg, that God would give us the Enjoyment of Himſelf; ſince in the Accompliſhment of this Deſire, all our Happineſs will conſiſt. But till our Affections are plac'd on their right Object, God may ſhew more kindneſs, in denying, than in giving us the Deſires of our Hearts, ſince we may periſh by the ſucceſs and grant of them. And what can be more reaſonable, what more advantageous and pleaſant to us than to entertain our ſelves with agreeable and de-

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lightful Apprehenſions of the beſt and moſt worthy Being? Who, as he is endu'd with infinite Perfections, is the fitteſt Object of the Love and Adoration of Immortal Souls; and as he has been infinitely kind and beneficent to us, creating a whole World to ſerve us here, and providing a Heaven to glorify us hereafter; we ought in Gratitude to love him, *becauſe he firſt lov'd us.* For what could Infinite Goodneſs do more to enflame our Love, than to make our Duty conſiſt in *Delight*, in *Pleaſure* it ſelf, and to offer us all the Rewards that *our own Hearts can deſire*, to encourage our Performance of it? If theſe Conſiderations can't affect us, and charm our Hearts into a willing Obedience, we may aſſure our ſelves that no other motives will be able to make any Impreſſion upon us: For all the Arguments that can convince us of the Agreeableneſs of Religion, all the Motives which can engage us in the Practice of it, are contain'd in the words of the Text, *Delight thou in the Lord, and he ſhall give thee thy Hearts deſire.*

What remains therefore, but that we take all Opportunities of retiring from the hurry of the World, to contemplate and adore the great Author of our Being, to *taſte and ſee how gracious the Lord is*, and what ineffable Joys he has provided even here, for thoſe who are ſo good as to *delight* in him. Then ſhall we be convinc'd of the Truth of the Text, by the moſt ſenſible proof, our own Experience, and *do our Fathers Will* on Earth, with as much Pleaſure and Chearfulneſs, *as it is done in Heaven.* Then will our Souls be ever flying on the wings of Prayer and Meditation into the Preſence of our Lord, and have ſo lively and ſenſible a Perception of God, that we

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ſhall love him with ſome degree of that Affection with which we are belov'd by him. Then ſhall we paſs away the ſhort time of our Sojourning here, and an Eternity hereafter, in ſuch Tranſports of Bliſs, as are beyond expreſſion; in a perfect Union with Him *whom our Soul loves*, and whom we ſhall ſtill love more and more through all Eternity.

Which that we may all do, God of his Infinite Mercy grant for the ſake of his moſt dearly beloved Son *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord, to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcrib'd, as is moſt due, all Honour and Praiſe, now and for ever. *Amen.*

FINIS.